

For Immediate Release
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Sikkema Solves 20-J Districts Shortfall

*Majority Leader proposes using proceeds
From state land sale to Toyota to fill funding gap*

LANSING – Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema today said he has found a way to protect 20-J school districts from cuts by using the proceeds from the sale of state land in York Township to Toyota.

“Revenue from this sale is not committed elsewhere in the budget and this seems a good use of it to restore the cuts that the Granholm administration and legislative leaders agreed to last week,” Sikkema said. “Protecting education and bringing good-paying jobs to Michigan are top priorities for the Senate Republican Caucus and now we can do both at the same time.”

Sikkema, R-Wyoming, said he has asked House Speaker Rick Johnson and Gov. Jennifer Granholm to amend the 2005 fiscal year budget agreement to earmark \$6.6 million from the Toyota sale to the School Aid Trust Fund, eliminating the need to cut \$74 per pupil from 22 of Michigan’s wealthiest school districts. Sikkema said the Legislature is set to act this week on a bill to convey the 640-acre York Township site to Toyota, which plans to locate a research and technology center there.

“This is new, one-time money in the budget and we can use it to offset these cuts if the speaker and the governor are willing to support my proposal,” Sikkema said. “Unlike some alternative proposals that would have cut funding to every student in Michigan, my proposal does not help one district at the expense of another.”

Sikkema said he was angered last week at suggestions he brokered some sort of backroom deal to cut about 1 percent from school districts that receive more than \$9,000 per pupil in state funding; nearly 90 percent of Michigan’s school districts receive only the state minimum of \$6,700 per pupil. He said the cuts to the wealthiest school districts was proposed by Gov. Granholm in her budget recommendations made in March and have been part the budget negotiations from the beginning.

“Evidently, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson had a conversation with the governor last Wednesday night that I was not privy to, where it was indicated the governor was amenable to some change in 20-J funding, but the administration never proffered this change to the Legislature at the time I, Speaker Johnson and State Budget Director Mary Lannoye signed the budget agreement,” Sikkema said. “To say I squelched a deal that was never presented to me by the administration is not only wrong; it is politically and intellectually dishonest.”

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28TH SENATE DISTRICT